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THE  
BELFAST MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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COMMUNICATIONS, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

*To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.*

GENTLEMEN,

I have observed various ingenious disquisitions in your Magazine, concerning Music, and the probable dispositions of those who are, or who are not enamoured of its charms. Notwithstanding what was advanced by your correspondents, I feel the same impressions on this subject that I have always felt, and am persuaded, that, however we may estimate the moral effects of music, and the particular tone of feeling which must accompany a taste for this elegant art, there is nothing in it which is indicative of moral character, separate from other more important features of mind. I know men of unquestionable moral worth and feeling, who have no ear for music, who can hardly even distinguish a quick movement from a slow. The moral cast of mind which each man possesses, flows from other very different sources, than a particular tone of the auditory nerve. Education principally forms the man. It also very much contributes to form the musical taste. Those children who have early been accustomed to hear good music, in general grow up possessed of a good ear, and good taste : and the contrary is equally observable. It is therefore to exalt music beyond its proper place, to ascribe any important moral effects to it, or to imagine, that a particular cast of moral features always, or generally accompany a particular feeling or taste, with respect to musical sounds.

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However, this is not a subject of any very particular importance. It is sufficient to know, that music is a truly pleasing study, and that it is deserving of our high regard. It has commanded the love and reverence of the wise, the great and good, in all ages. It has been employed to inspire men with the love of virtuous fame, and to animate them to heroic deeds. It has aided the historic bard in transmitting the remembrance of illustrious actions to remote ages. It has contributed to animate the devotion of the sacred bard, and to inspire the holy band with awful reverence for divine things.

In modern times, music has not been employed only for the purpose of celebrating the deeds of virtue, and to animate the human mind to the desire of chaste renown. Often have the tones of love been used to adorn the unchaste numbers of the effeminate voluptuary, and the strains of woe to embellish the whining plaint of modern affectation and folly. It moves me with indignation to see the sacred art of music thus degraded, and to observe the finest airs that ever trembled on the wire, forced into this ignoble service. Avaunt ! ye puny bardlings, ye whimpering idiots, who pollute the public taste by your luxurious and degrading verses ! Begone from the sacred precincts where Apollo strings his lyre, and where devotion tunes the harp of Israel's King. *Abeste profani.* Let virtue lead the song, and let none except her votaries presume to guide the public taste.

Y Y

Of the instruments which have, of late years, attracted public attention, the harp holds a distinguished place. Yet after all that has been urged in its favour, I candidly confess it is no favourite with me. That all the old Irish airs should be preserved, is, I think, perfectly right. To discover zeal in this matter, demonstrates both a proper spirit of nationality and a good taste. The Irish airs, are, in general so excellent, that it would be a great pity that any of them should be lost. But to revive an instrument, so poor and so imperfect as the Irish harp, argues the influence perhaps, of a highly national feeling, but a feeling, at the same time, not governed by the chaste control of sound reason. I reverence the feelings of that man, who is enraptured with the tones of the Irish harp, while I condemn his judgment, in giving it a preference to others, and in wishing to introduce it into general practice. If superior instrument of music be invented from time to time, why not give them a decided preference, even to the *once* highly esteemed instruments of a former age? In the common arts, we adopt the latest improvements, to the rejection of the less perfect modes of those who have gone before us. Why not follow the same path in the fine arts? The guitar and harpsichord were once highly esteemed. But now the piano-forte takes the lead, while the guitar and harpsichord are nearly unknown. So, the pedal harp is a better instrument than the Irish harp. Why not, therefore, give it a decided preference?

The piano-forte is certainly an excellent instrument; yet I have a remark or two to make respecting those who are generally taught to play upon it. It is now the universal rage, for persons even in very moderate circumstances, to have

their daughters taught music. Taste or no taste, is rarely the question. Rivalry is the motive; and little Miss must play, whether she has ear and taste, or not. This is abundantly foolish. Where a girl discovers good powers, and where her father's circumstances are affluent, it would be a pity not to give her an opportunity of learning to play on a good instrument; but unquestionably, the labours of two thirds of those who are taught to play on the piano, as a necessary accomplishment, forsooth, are bestowed to very little purpose. All they learn signifies just nothing at all: for as soon as these females get married, and have families, the piano is shut up, and doomed to an almost perpetual silence. Possessing no genius, no enthusiasm for the powers of song, they care nothing about it; and in a short time, all that they had before learned is totally forgotten. The loss of time, the drudgery, and the expense never meet with any sufficient compensation.

For men of moderate means, therefore, to put themselves to such expense, on account of their daughters' musical education, when those daughters discover little or no taste, and still less fondness for the study of music, is one of the miraculous mistakes of human life.

If music must be learned, I will recommend an instrument less expensive by far, incomparably less difficult to learn, and not less pleasing, for a variety of airs; the Musical Glasses. These are adapted chiefly for slow airs, and produce music uncommonly sweet and pleasing to the ear. I am glad that they are coming into pretty general use. To those young ladies who have not a very fine natural talent, I recommend the glasses. They are simple, not expensive, easily learned, and not so liable to be forgotten. It is

high time that we should become sensible of the criminal waste of time with which many are chargeable, who spend years in attempting to learn an instrument, on which nature never intended that they should excel. After all their toil, they receive nothing that approaches to the idea of a sufficient compensation. None except professional men should make a *business* of music; others should regard it only as an agreeable recreation.

A.Z.

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For the *Belfast Monthly Magazine*.

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*The Inspector.*

NO. II.

MY former number having obtained a place in the *Belfast Magazine*, I am encouraged again to seize the pen, and to proceed in recording the observations which I have made at different times, and under various circumstances. To those who are contented with a mere *superficial* view of men and manners, of situations and occurrences, some of these observations, no doubt, will appear contradictory, and some of the descriptions wild and exaggerated; but in the study of human nature, we will meet with characters displaying in themselves almost every species of inconsistency, and consequently scenes may be presented which cannot be too highly coloured. The mind of man is often found to be a curious medley of strength and weakness, wisdom and folly, liberal sentiments and contracted ideas. In the same individual, qualities of the most opposite nature are exhibited; these discordant principles frequently meet, and jarring passions contend for superiority. Hence it is that we sometimes meet with odd compounds of extravagance and parsimony, temerity and cowardice, sense and ab-

surdity, vanity and understanding. Hence, also, the number of *originals* we encounter in the world, and hence those *eccentric* characters which afford food to the comedian, and entertainment to the lovers of the drama; which are often successfully portrayed on the stage; and which, though bare representatives, appear to many, ridiculous *caricatures* of human inconsistency. But perhaps the *female* mind in this respect, is in a particular degree remarkable, and if minutely examined, will yield an infinite variety of subjects for curious speculation; more pliant and elastic than the mind of man, properly so called; it is easily affected by *immediate* causes, and freely takes its tone from surrounding objects. The nature of female education, it is true, tends greatly to suppress many propensities of the heart, and the respect with which the fair sex are particularly called upon, to treat the opinions of the world, is often a powerful restraint on their native dispositions; but even under this restraint, a minute *inspector* will behold the workings of their natural tempers; and it only requires a due degree of encouragement to make them break forth in all their energy. Sometimes, indeed, the consequences are such as may give us reason to regret the experiment; but in the establishment of a theory, who regards consequences?

Zelinda is the daughter of a clergyman who possessed a lively imagination, a refined taste, a tolerable share of judgment, but a small fortune. She received from her father all he could bestow, a good education. Her talents were such as rendered instruction easy, and her delighted parents beheld with extacy her rapid progress in almost every accomplishment. She early met with those whose praises excited her vanity, and though this principle was